

# Spartacus no. 47

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I don't think I've heard a more satisfying sound in decades than the click of the courtroom door shutting behind Darryl Chauvin. Justice *satisfies*. It brings *closure*. It may not be enough for the survivors of crime's victims – but it is what the law can do.

On so many levels, in this case, justice has been done. The sadistic act of a brutal psychopath has been recognized as such and will be punished. The limits of law enforcement have been re-established in this society. A necessary dialogue has been called forth on the racial divide which is America's most fundamental flaw. Humane, balanced, rational standards for the manner in which individuals treat each other and government behaves towards its citizens have been demanded. Most importantly, the moral idea that established this country – *all men are created equal* – has been revalidated. Americans have said, by what we will not tolerate, who we are.

I have never seen a cleaner, sharper prosecution. When I was a public defender I worked with many worthy ADAs, but often they fell back on innuendo and insult – especially in Jefferson Parish, where they needed no help at all to convict ~~black~~ most defendants. Name-calling was almost irresistible in the Chauvin case, but these prosecutors stuck to the law and the facts. It was inspiring.

Also praise-worthy was the collapse of the legendary Blue Wall of Silence, that perverse loyalty every cop has for every other cop, as it got through to professional police that – as my father-in-law said, watching Derek Chauvin commit his horrible crime on video – “There’s something wrong with that man!” I hope everyone who disbelieved me about the wanton police brutality I witnessed and endured as a college kid saw the same video. I hope they heard the same professionals testify that Chauvin’s act wasn’t professional police work, but criminal neglect at best, criminal murder at worst.

That said, some of the subsequent police homicides that followed would likewise fail under fair scrutiny. The policewoman who mistook her Glock for a Taser – and ended up blowing away a stupid, panicked kid – was ragingly guilty of manslaughter and/or negligent homicide. But others in my judgment would not fail. The cop called in to break up a neighborhood cat fight, who ended up shooting a knife-wielding teenage girl, acted completely within his duties; I don’t see any other way he could have protected the innocent party the girl was trying to stab. A young cop I knew in St. John Parish ran into a lunatic who had gone off his meds. When he tried to calm him down, the guy slashed him across the face with scissors and stuck the points into his throat ... before my guy got his gun free and ended the danger to himself and others. Terrible and tragic events – but terrible events are why we employ cops. What society needs to do is insure they’re *good* cops who are suited to, and aren’t damaged by, the job.

So: better and deeper training, sharper standards, no more assumptions of correct conduct or good faith. And awareness on their art that they’re being watched and recorded and that such transparency is part of the job.

The George Floyd case has also forced us to talk about race in the United States, and for as long as it lasted, it was a productive and honest conversation. People seemed less defensive on the subject, less patient with hysteria. I didn’t hear some of my own questions voiced, but time enough for that. If we keep this dialogue – this multilogue – going, the questions *will* come up, and with good will, they will be answered. (We may even be able to debate reparations – the stupidest, craziest, bring-back-Trumpiest idea I’ve heard.)



**Let’s talk Fandom.** From *Ansible*:

“**George R.R. Martin** has been in the news, both for his boast that ‘I wrote hundreds and hundreds of pages of *The Winds of Winter* in 2020’ ([blog](#), 2 February) and for being mentioned – not in a good way – in the Hugo shortlist, where Best Related Work includes Natalie Luhrs’s rant about his Hugo MC performance: ‘George R.R. Martin Can Fuck Off Into the Sun, Or: The 2020 Hugo Awards Ceremony (Rageblog Edition)’ ([pretty-terrible.com](#), 1 August 2020). It has been wickedly suggested that the 2021 Worldcon, by having to publish this hurtful-to-GRRM title in the usual places, may thus be in violation of its own Code of Conduct.”

I've read the nominated post. The sheer pettiness and vindictiveness of the piece is itself remarkable, but what most offends me are two things: the sheer viciousness of the attack on George RR Martin and the author's insertion of race into the discussion. Worthy recent attention to the issue to the contrary, ***not everything is about race***. The author of the ugly post seems to imply that fandom owes a writer its highest award because of the color of their skin or the suffering of their ethnicity or their gender identity ... forgetting or ignoring the much more sensible concept that awards are given for *works*, and it is the quality of the *work* that matters. Frankly, I think this point of view damaging to the ideal of a non-racist society; you don't win arguments by making one's opponent feel evil, you prevail in by showing their perspective to be wrong. The posting states – as if it proved something – that a black author didn't win the Hugo for Best Novel until 2016. I put it another way: a novel *written by a black writer* didn't win the Hugo for Best Novel until 2016. I propose that we trust the good faith of our fellow fans, and say that this wasn't because of white privilege or covert racism; the books simply didn't hit the Hugo mark.

The personal attack on RR Martin is a far worse offense. As Langford suggests, its ugliness, obscenity and irrationality are almost undoubtedly a violation of the Worldcon's own Code of Conduct. Coupled with DisCon's exclusion of Toni Weiskopf from its list of Guests of Honor – comments here, there and everywhere – it shows a timidity and a cravenness ill-suited to sane and sensible and *fair* resolution of conflicts. Bad, bad, *bad* form.

You know, I'm proud of my 14 Hugo nominations. Along with our DUFF delegacy, my Rebel Award and our Fan Guest of Honor stints, they're the highest honors fandom has brought. But with the victory of the Jeanette Ng slur against John W. Campbell, Jr., and the nomination for this truly scurrilous attack on George – creator of the most important and influential fantasy epic since *Lord of the Rings* – I'm just as glad that my era of Hugo recognition seems to be over. Call me when reason and courage prevail.

*Dealing with another Worldcon issue, a comment from **Gary Robe**:*

I was minding my own business when Corlis [*Gary's wife*] called me from her office to ask me if I'd seen the e-mail from DisCon III. I'd been expecting something from the convention to announce that it either was cancelled or had significantly downscaled. I knew that the original hotel had closed and gone bankrupt and was unlikely to reopen in time for the convention. I knew there was talk of moving the convention to December and relocating to a smaller venue. That was not what the e-mail was about.

I was speechless when I realized that DisCon III was announcing that they were cancelling Toni Weiskopf's invitation and Editor Guest of Honor. The reasons were vague and very high-minded sounding. The e-mail wasn't clear that the Worldcon Committee was accusing Toni of publicly espousing something hateful or that someone associated with Baen Books somewhere engaged in hate speech and Toni had not acted to stop them. What the e-mail amounted to was that someone somewhere was offended by something that Toni either did or that she failed to act when someone associated with her offended someone. Anyhow a Complaint Was Registered and the DisCon III Committee decided to disinvite Toni to the convention.

Well, fine. That's their decision. I was looking forward to attending a Worldcon within easy driving distance of home. I would probably have even volunteered to work

on the convention. I know that some of the people on the bid committee had indicated they had a role in mind for The Robe Experience. That's done now. Whether or not they resolve the problems with hotels and scheduling, they'll be doing it without any Robes attending.

Toni is one of my oldest friends. I know her well enough to be very aware of her political leanings, and that they do not mesh with mine. I also know that hasn't ever stopped us from having great times together stretching into the wee hours of convention mornings. We understand each other well enough to realize that nothing either of us can say will change the other's political stances. That hasn't kept us from talking about everything else from fanac to art to space exploration.

What really made me furious was the high-handed and cowardly way that the DisCon III chairman made the announcement. The gist was that somebody somewhere complained about something and the committee acted to placate that noise. I'm sorry, but this is Toni we're talking about. I can't say that it's unthinkable that Toni actually said or did something that someone would find offensive. That's her First Amendment right. If the offense was severe enough (like if she participated in the Capitol insurrection on 1/6; please don't think I'm saying that she did, I'm only giving an example of behavior that might have justified DisCon's actions) then I might even agree that removing her as a guest was appropriate.

The point is that the burden of proof is on the DisCon III Committee, and it's a very high bar for me. They offered nothing in the way of documentation of their decision, and that makes me conclude that their decision was based on some Karen or snowflake somewhere who's first reaction to something that offends them is to start a fight about it. The way that the DisCon III handled this wasn't anywhere near good enough, and I won't be participating in their convention.

*What ho! Rich Lynch ...*  
<rw\_lynch@yahoo.com>

Concerning the removal of Toni Weiskopf as one of the 2021 Worldcon's Guests of Honor, you write that: "Toni and I have never talked politics because we disagree on the topic so absolutely. Who cares? We're *family*." Yeah, I feel the same way about her as well. I've known her well before she had embarked on her career as an editor/publisher at Baen – we first met at a Huntsville, Alabama science fiction convention in 1980, back when she was still a college student. And we've been friends ever since. So, like you, I was angry about how her being dis-invited all went down, especially since there were other options available. I'm now very much in doubt that I even want to attend Discon 3.

But here's the thing – I'm also friends with the chair of Discon, and I feel sympathy for him that the convention was pushed into a corner by horribly abusive behavior that was occurring on one of Baen's own online discussion forums, so much so

that just doing nothing seemed not an option. This whole thing stinks to high heaven, and I am appalled that the people on the forum who were indulging in that kind of behavior, reportedly even including one of Baen's authors, are not the ones who are recipients of all the hostility that has been directed at Toni. This whole thing could have been handled so much better, from both sides.

*Why "both sides"? Seems to me that that Toni is feeling the entire brunt of this mess, and DisCon should bear the entire blame.*

*Here's a letter sent to DisCon III by **Jeff Copeland**.*

From: **Jeff Copeland** <[jeff.copeland@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.copeland@gmail.com)>

Date: Sun, Mar 14, 2021 at 3:59 PM

Subject: guests of honor

To: <[info@DisCon3.org](mailto:info@DisCon3.org)>, <[chair@DisCon3.org](mailto:chair@DisCon3.org)> Cc: Toni Weisskopf <[toni@baen.com](mailto:toni@baen.com)>

Bill Lawhorn, Chair, DisCon III

Dear Bill:

Your February 19 announcement that you've disinvited Toni Weisskopf as a guest of honor at DisCon is one of the silliest things I've heard in a year of remarkably insanity. It is at best the height of rudeness; at worst reprehensible behavior. It is so frustrating that this letter has spent three weeks being successively revised from incandescent to flaming to merely infuriated.

I've got more than 40 years of convention-going fandom in my past, including multiple turns as Worldcon department head, Hugo administrator, Site Selection administrator, and software consultant to Hugo subcommittees. That has allowed me to see some calamitous screwups, from the 1980 Los Angeles Westercon where the hotel used off-duty LAPD officers as security guards who proceeded to harass the members, to a Phoenix regional where the hotel completely double-booked itself, to Worldcons in Spokane, Toronto, and New Orleans, each of which had their own levels of clumsiness.

But you have just taken the biscuit.

No one --- *no one* --- is without something in their past or something they have been involved with that they would take back if they could. Or even things they wouldn't take back but could be painted as evil. Were I to run for public office, I have no doubt someone would dig up some of my Usenet posts from the 1990s to feed to my opponent. I'm sure it would not be difficult to find pejorative snippets marginally related to you or your division heads. We could then wave them around, jumping up and down and screaming.

You are fundamentally asking Toni to be responsible for things other people have written on a forum that her company makes available to fans and writers. This is a standard to which you cannot hold any other media company. Indeed, it took Facebook five years to come up with a policy on violent and hate speech that it was willing and able to enforce, something you are expecting Baen books to implement overnight.

You're also holding Toni and Baen to a standard to which you are not able to hold any panelist at any convention for which you have ever been a committee member. Nor, for that matter could you hold any of the other guests at DisCon to it.

Are you planning, for example, to disinvite Malka Older for advocating world authoritarianism in *Infomacracy*? Or Nancy Kress for writing about miscegenation in "Out of All Them Bright Stars"? At least artist guest John Harris isn't famous for drawing anatomically incorrect women.

Worse, rather than making a decision for yourselves, you are bowing to pressure from one jacked-up, disgruntled internet troll and a bunch of people piling on, blowing with the winds of social media. This is the same mistake you made in the debacle that resulted in annoying every potential Hugo nominee and losing your co-chair.

Larry Niven once characterized an immaterial clerical error I'd made as Hugo administrator as "not just fuggheadedness, but classic fannish fuggheadedness."

I await with bated breath your next stumbling journey into new, and as yet unexplored, territory of fannish fuggheadedness.

Sincerely,  
**Jeffrey Copeland**

*Jeff also LOCs **Spartacus** 46:*

While it's a shame that some of Dr Seuss's books will no longer be available for sale, the folks who own the copyright --- the Foundation set up by Suess's widow --- believe that the stereotypes in some of the illustrations in those books are no longer appropriate. They can do what they want with their property. That's how capitalism works.

Language changes. Our sensibilities change. We now say "eeney meeney miney moe... catch a *tiger* by the toe." While those drawings of African natives were not outlandish at the time they were drawn, by the time I was reading *If I Ran the Zoo* to my children, I was cringing at them. (That said, I will miss that book, which introduced the word "nerd.")

Those books have not had huge sales in any case. If they hadn't issued a press release, nobody would have noticed, and we could have saved ourselves a lot of whining.

Could they commission new drawings to replace those? Maybe. But I don't know the terms under which their rights were granted. Remember that (at least) Charles Schulz's contract with Universal Syndicate allows his Peanuts cartoons to be reprinted now that he's dead, but doesn't allow anyone to draw new cartoons with his characters. And, at least in the case of Suess's *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, the "Chinese man who eats with sticks" is so integral to the story that merely changing a drawing isn't going to solve the issue.

Moving on to Pepe le Pew: Once again, my dear fellow, you are full of shit.

You say, "Despite my court experience and knowing victims, I have never been able to accept the idea of ours being a 'rape culture.'"

While all men are not rapists, for too long, we have excused men who ARE rapists and abusers with a wink and a nod. Harvey Weinstein's casting couch? Oh, well, that's what happens in Hollywood. Matt Lauer, Bill O'Reilly, and others? They're just privileged TV performers. College students who get drunk BEFORE going to fraternity parties and end up attacking co-eds? What do the girls expect? Two Supreme Court Justices, one a rapist and one a serial harasser. Jackie Gleason's entertaining wife-beater Ralph Cramden.

If that doesn't deserve the label "rape culture" I don't know what does.

As for the immediate case of a certain anthropomorphic French skunk, you say, "we make nuisances and fools out of ourselves in pursuit of women's *luv*. And we get informed of it and razed for it by characters like Pepe le Pew."

Au contraire: we are not being razed by Pepe. He's telling us that when the girl says "no", we should pursue her all the more. It is completely counter to what we are trying to teach our young men --- what I was at pains to try to teach my son --- "no" means NO. Monsieur le Pew doesn't understand that and is a stalker. He's stopped being funny.

If you want to see a gentle case of making fools of ourselves for love --- and taking "no" for an answer --- I point you to the 1955 Alec Guinness film *To Paris With Love*.

*The problem here is one of definition. You seem to define rape as any sort of hostility or even unwanted attention towards women. Fandom is incredibly sloppy in this regard: as I've said before, I've seen an interrupted conversation called a rape. (Hell, why not call it murder? Child endangerment? Auto theft? None **dare** call it treason. Only you and I are old enough to get that joke.)*

*I, as you can imagine, take a lawyer's view. Rape is tricky to define – states differ – but two aspects of the act are general: penetration, without consent. It is, beyond any quibble, a deadly serious crime. To cover all sexually-based offenses with its blanket is an injustice to its victims.*

*Even worse – to the point of ridiculous – is lumping a silly satiric cartoon in with obscene crimes. This demeans the genuine pain felt by its victims. Talk about blowing with the winds of social media!*

*Might as well go on with reader commentary*

...

**Ray Palm <raypalmx@gmail.com>**

ThanX for sending me *Spartacus* #46. Trump fades and PC roars back. I really missed political correctness extremism. I read with great interest about the unjustifiable screwing -- oops, I mean dubious disinvitation -- of Baen Editor Toni Weiskopf to DisCon III. The PC nazis -- sorry, I mean the sensitive



souls dedicated to remaking the world in their own image -- placed blame on someone who wasn't the moderator of the Baen Books forum. Just grab the biggest barn brush and tar them all!

But I must point to your usage of the term Oriental on page 4 when you discussed the Dr. Seuss books that were dropped by the publisher. Didn't you know that word is racist?!! I know you can Google a definition for it online and find it out only means "of, from, or characteristic of Asia, especially East Asia." But the PC Nazis say this word is evil.

And as for Pepe Le Pew? The character was created to mock an employee in the cartoon production department who thought he was a great lover. It satirized the men who thought they could sweep women off their feet with their suave manner. It didn't imply rape but why take chances? Cancel!

To top it off don't forget euphemisms do work. In my area there is a state operation once called Dannemora Prison. But that name evoked such a negative image and so it was renamed Clinton Correctional Facility. Why recidivism rates dropped! Stereotypes disappeared! With the new image no one wanted to escape, it was such a joy to serve time there. Ask David Sweat and Richard Matt.

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Many thanks for issue 46 of *Spartacus*.

The politics behind DisCon III's decision with Toni Weisskopf just reinforces our decision never to return to Worldcons. Many parts of the Worldcon process are too easily manipulated by special interest groups. The politics of the typical Worldcon should not affect fans from elsewhere in the world. Myself, I'm tired of it. Our last Worldcon was Reno in 2011.

More politics that are frankly unnecessary ... Dr. Seuss. The removal of the six books from print was a business decision, but also a wise avoidance of possible offence in the future. As you say, the artwork and writing was fine for the time it was published, but it certainly could offend today. So I would say that the business decision was wise and sensitive. Still lots of Seussian fun with his many remaining books.

Pepé le Pew ... more politics. Again, we judge a part of society back then by our standards today, and that really isn't fair. For me, Pepé's real crime is his cheesy French accent, no? And you read that line in the cheesy French accent, *oui? Sacré pink!*

Prince Philip is dead. As many people liked him as despised him, so his passing may have solved the problem. What some of us worry about is the effect on Queen Elizabeth II. Many couples who have been together for many years pass on within days or weeks of each other. Elizabeth has spent her life in public service, and she was married to Philip for 73 years. Even here, it's difficult to care about the line of royal succession, but we will have to care about it at some point, for the Queen is 94 ...



The Chauvin trial in Minneapolis ... it has some presence here, only because we get a handful of American channels. There is the expectation of a guilty verdict, even more so with the police murder of Daunte Wright. I have been informed that “To Serve and Protect” and “shoot to disable, but not to kill” are mere television tropes that I wish all police forces would adopt. And the idea of gun control still evades too many American politicians. I found out recently that some right-wing Canadians have formed the Republican Party of Canada. I roll my eyes, but as long as the right is split in the country, and it is happening more and more, they will lose any power here, and we will have some measure of sane politics here.

Your [*Whose?*] Republican Party may be splintering, but they are still loud and unbelievable out of tune with reality. The madness has now moved to the state levels where upwards of 40 states are putting through, if not considering, legislation that make it more difficult for the poor, BIPOCs and other groups to vote. Disgraceful, but after four years of 45, not all that surprising.

I support Justin Trudeau, but as you do with Joe Biden, I keep an eye on his government. Some promised are yet to be kept, and they are long overdue. I understand to some degree with the handling of the pandemic, and a gigantic debt has been rung up to support our everyday lives in a time with little or no employment, but some election promises must be kept. There are times when I think we need newer people in office, and some completely new political parties. (I certainly don't mean the earlier mentioned Republican Party of Canada ...)

Politics is an everyday part of life, I understand, and I have been told that several times. I know that good politics helps make good things happen. But sometimes, all we get is the nasty, sleazy politics, from parties who claim they have the nation's interests at heart, but make huge differences between the nation and the people. It's too easy to throw your hands up and walk away from it all. Or are we so used to Trump politics, any other lesser politics are noticed and criticized?

Descend from soapbox, and shut up, that's what I will do. Gotta watch the blood pressure, anyway. Take care, say hello to Rose, and see you in your next zine.



I am once again turning my attention to *Challenger* no.43, a special Theodore Sturgeon issue – contributors? Money, fame, Hugos, sex ... *all* are yours if you send me art or article!

Of course, a top-flight SFer like Sturgeon has enjoyed fanzine attention before. For preeminent instance, Hugo-winning *Lan's Lantern's* #36, published by editor George “Lan” Lascowski in 1991, a special issue on Ted. I bought a copy on eBay and find it so dauntingly superb I know I have to reprint some of its stuff. Trouble is, Lan died in 1999 – only 51 years old, a shame – so if I wanted to do things the right way and gain permission, I'd need the okay of his widow, Maia Cowan.

But no one knows where she is. There are Maia Cowans on White Pages and Facebook, but none have responded to my scurrilous advances. I have a request up in *File:770* and have

actually gotten some good tips from chums on the FM e-group and Joe Siclari of magnificent Fanac.org. I've written to Minn-STF, the esteemed Minneapolis club, for help, but so far, have heard zip. What else can I do? (And a legal, ethical question – if Maia and Lan were divorced, as one guy told me, do I owe her any such courtesy? If not her, who?)



Cool **Oscar** show. By the time you read this, it will have been many weeks since the 2020 Oscars were presented; here and now it's been only minutes. Someone compared the socially-distanced Union Station set to an old-fashioned Hollywood nightclub. I liked it. I liked the stripped-down ceremony without the ludicrous musical numbers and sodden jokes. It was refreshing not to have winners cut off in mid-thanks by an obtrusive hurry-hurry-hurry orchestra. And who needs a host?

I have a new respect for Tyler Perry after hearing his Jean Herscholt Humanitarian Award speech. In this year of Black lives Matter he made it clear that there is no room for race hatred in the America he, and by extension all of BLM, strives for.

Frances McDormand is now second only to Katharine Hepburn in Academy Award wins for leading actress. Her acting in *Nomadland* was calm, very quiet, strong, intense. I enjoyed the three other contending performances I saw, but McDormand was that movie's heart and soul. I cannot dispute her Best Actress win. I have adored her since *Blood Simple*, think her *Fargo* is a classic, and have never seen a movie with her that fell flat. I loved her howl when *Nomadland* – strange, sad, effective little movie – won Best Picture, which for *some* reason AMPAS gave out *before* the top acting awards, and her impertinent cry for karaoke.

The Supporting Actress Oscar went to the great Korean actress Yuh-Jung Youn. She was hilarious, teasing Brad Pitt, *faux* complaining about the way her name keeps getting mispronounced. I have yet to see *Minari*, but Yuh-Jung will have to be truly extraordinary to top Olivia Colman, who was superb in *The Father*. Best Supporting Actor went to Daniel Kaluuya, the star of *Get Out* and a veteran of *Dr. Who*, whose street talk (“Know what I’m sayin’?”) belied his obvious intelligence. (Maybe he was still deep into his *Judas and the Black Messiah* character.) Another 2020 gem I’ll have to catch. Damn time and damn distance: I *will* glom these flicks. I’ve seen *every* Academy Award-winning performance in *all* of the four acting categories. *I will not stop now.*

Of course, the big noise out of this ceremony was the Chadwick Boseman/Anthony Hopkins “controversy” resulting from the latter’s unexpected victory as Best Actor. It added to my respect for AMPAS. Clearly, the Academy voted neither for sentiment nor for politics but for superiority in the art of acting. Not to disparage poor Boseman; his *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* performance was fine, but brief, and came down to one well-delivered speech of anguish. Hopkins, OTOH, is considered the finest actor in the language, and *The Father* a career-crowning tour-de-force, sustained, “organic,” heart-breaking. I was stunned by the what he put into the character, and ricocheted off the ceiling with glee over his win. Not quite as high as I bounced when he won for *The Silence of the Lambs* 28 years ago, but respectably close. [Note: I do **not** exaggerate: *adrenalin kept me up all night!*] A golden moment.

Here’s a thought. Could it be that the “woke” liberation and diversity touted all night at the Oscars extends to age as well as race? *Old* Lives Matter?



Late in the summer of 1969, New Orleans held a parade in honor of **Mike Collins**, member of the Apollo 11 crew. While Armstrong and Aldrin descended to the lunar surface on \*ahem\* my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, he held the fort in the command module, waiting to pick them up for the journey home. He advised Neil that his first words on the Moon should be a terrified scream, grew a moustache his wife made him shave, wrote a hilarious memoir of his astronaut career called *Carrying the Fire*. And he rode in a convertible through the streets of New Orleans that passed within two yards, no more, of Guy H. Lillian III, among the billions of people who owed him so much. In this season, at age 90, he again passed from the Earth.

**Penny Frierson**, chairman of the best Worldcon I ever attended – ConFederation, 1986 – and several DeepSouthCons, wife to Meade, member of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and hostess to yhos and many another visitor to Birmingham (together we went to see – but not listen to – Spiro Agnew), passed away in late April, 2021. She was 79, and leaves behind grand memories.

For those out there who are not members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, **Joe Moudry** is a well-known SF and horror fan, living in Tuscaloosa, a retired university librarian, a member of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, and a former Official Editor and Emergency Officer of SFPA. On occasion during these last tenures Joe would host any SFPAn who would come by to apa collating parties at his home, where he and his then-wife **Phyllis** (on whom I have always had an unrequited crush), would allow us crash space and tolerate our presence.

During these trips to Joe's abode, I met and made friends with his kids, **Catherine Leigh** and **Ben**. I got on wonderfully with Ben. Like the Copelands' boy James and Ned Brooks' nephew Joe McCarthy, he was a surrogate nephew for *me*, a splendid kid to kid and with whom to hang.

In late April, many years after those epic SFPARTIES, Leigh – now a mother herself – posted staggeringly bad news on Facebook. Ben, 41, had died. Leigh said that it may have been his heart – an inherited family health problem.

I cannot imagine the familial anguish. I hope I will never face such agony. Of course Rosy and I wish Ben's family, superb people all, grand memories and deep healing. I wonder, though, at a universe where youth and goodness are no safeguard against disease and mayhem. We frail human beings can build a barrier of knowledge, but what can disciplines like physics tell us about the fundamental insanity at the heart of creation? What can possibly make such waste and chaos make sense?

I echo the last scene in *The Virgin Spring*. Max von Sydow addresses God: "I do not understand you! I do *not* understand you!" And yet, on the spot, he builds a church.





Max von Sydow  
Signe Veiberg  
Gunnel Lindblom  
Birgitta Pettersson

INGMAR  
BERGMANS

Jungfrukällan

